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The Rise of the Warrior Goddess in Ancient India. A Study of the Myth Cycle of Kavśiki-Vvindhyaśinī in the Skandapurāna

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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2005

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Yokochi, Y. (2005). *The Rise of the Warrior Goddess in Ancient India. A Study of the Myth Cycle of Kavśiki-Vvindhyaśinī in the Skandapurāna: a study of the myth cycle of Kauśikī- Vindhyaśinī in the Skandapurāna*. [Thesis fully internal (DIV), University of Groningen]. s.n.

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Chapter 5

The Assimilation of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī to Vindhyavāsīnī and the Rise of ‘the Warrior Goddess’

5.1 Vindhyavāsīnī’s Slaying of the Demon Mahiṣa in the *Skandapurāṇa*

The study of the Vindhyavāsīnī myth in the Kauśikī cycle of the *Skandapurāṇa* in comparison with that in the *Harivaṃśa*, in the previous chapter, suggested that Vindhyavāsīnī was in the middle of her evolution into a supra-regional warrior goddess around the time of the composition of the *Skandapurāṇa*. In order to clarify the process of this evolution further, the role of another demon-slaying goddess in the process, namely Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, ‘the goddess who slays the buffalo demon’, must also be discussed. Mahiṣāsūramardīnī was probably the most popular demon-slaying goddess in the period dealt with in the present study. Her popularity since the Kuṣāṇa period, at least in North India, is well attested by a number of images that represent a goddess killing a buffalo. On the other hand, textual sources for this myth are not known before the sixth century. Of the four earliest such documents ascribed to between the sixth to the middle of the eighth centuries, it is only in the *Skandapurāṇa* that this myth is narrated in a coherent sequence.¹ This chapter will first study this episode

¹The other three are an introductory verse of benediction in an inscription of Anantavarman of the Maukharis, engraved in a cave in the Nāgārjuni Hill in Bihar and ascribed to the sixth century; Bāṇabhaṭṭa’s *Caṇḍīśataka* composed in the first half of the seventh century; Vākpatirāja’s *Gauḍavaho* composed in the second quarter of the eighth century. All of them will be discussed later in this chapter. In the *Mahābhārata*, there are two eulogies dedicated to Durgā that are often counted among the early references to the

in the Kauśikī cycle of the *Skandapurāṇa*, and then examine the archaeological evidence of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī images related to the iconographical description in the episode in detail. Lastly, after studying the other three textual sources, how and when the two demon-slaying goddesses, Vindhya-vāsinī and Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, were assimilated and created ‘the Warrior Goddess’ will be investigated, drawing the textual sources and archaeological evidence together.

Kauśikī-Vindhya-vāsinī’s slaying of the demon Mahiṣa is related briefly in SP 68.10–23² at the end of Layer B, after the entire cycle of her slaying of the demon brothers Sumbha and Nisumbha and her ensuing consecration. This supplementary location of the episode, as well as its brevity, indicates that the slaying of Mahiṣāsura was not an original constituent of the Vindhya-vāsinī myth, but incorporated into it from a different source. The story runs as follows:

Some time later, the sage Śaradvat Gautama invited Devī (i.e. Kauśikī) to his sacrifice at Svarṇākṣa. She set out to attend the sacrifice. On her way [back], the demon Mahiṣa, the son of Sumbha, awaited her, seeking revenge. Aware of him, Vindhya-vāsinī also hastened to the place where he awaited her. When the demon saw her, he attacked her fiercely, flinging himself upon her and striking her bosom with his hard horn. After withstanding his blow, she seized his horn with her hand, whirled him aloft and hurled him down onto the earth. Lifting up his tail and putting her foot on his head, she pierced his back with a trident and robbed him of his life. Then, Kauśikī went back to her mountain abode (i.e. Mt. Vindhya).

In this episode, Kauśikī fought a duel with Mahiṣa, resorting to her physical strength. This is partly due to the fact that the demon Mahiṣa

Mahiṣāsūramardīnī myth, although neither of them is included in the main text of the critical edition but relegated to appendices. Concerning the No.4 text in Appendix I of the *Virāṭaparvan*, all the seven different versions given therein are preserved only in Devanāgarī manuscripts, except for T₂, which is also close to the north Indian manuscripts (p.xxii of Prolegomena). This eulogy does not appear in Kṣemendra’s *Bhāratamañjarī* either, an epitome of the *Mahābhārata* composed around the middle of the eleventh century in Kashmir. Therefore, as mentioned by Raghu Vira, the chief editor of the Parvan, this eulogy is likely to be ‘a comparatively recent addition’ (p.xx of Prolegomena). Many verses of this eulogy have parallels in the description of Vindhya-vāsinī in the *Harivaṃśa* discussed in 3.1 (Yokochi 1999a, n.32). The other is contained in Appendix I, No.1 of the *Bhīṣmaparvan*. This eulogy is preserved in the majority of what Belvalkar, the chief editor of this Parvan, has designated ‘the group of late north Indian manuscripts’ (pp.xviii–xx, xxx, cvi–cx, cxxvi of Prolegomena), so that it is almost certainly a later addition. For these two eulogies, see also Coburn 1984, 267–275; Yokochi 1999a, 75.

²The English translation of this passage has been included in one of my papers (1999b) as Appendix B. A part of the text and an English translation are given by Bakker (1997, 130f) as a textual source of the icon of the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image from Nagardhan.

is depicted as theriomorphic throughout the story, which is evident from his appearance described in SP 68.12: 'he was thickset and had a broad breast, a stout neck, a fine tail, curved horns, and broad hoofs, his head being large and erect'. It is also said in 68.18ab, when he attacked Kauśikī, that 'his tail was erect, his horns were sharply pointed, his breast swelled, and his ears were stiff and pointed'. Kauśikī is described as wrestling with this theriomorphic demon Mahiṣa, 'the Buffalo', until the last lethal blow. Then, she thrust a trident (*triśūla*) into him for the first time, which caused Mahiṣa's death. This manner of her fight with Mahiṣa is in stark contrast to her chariot fight with Sumbha and Nisumbha, which also indicates an independent origin of this episode from the Vindhyavāsini myth proper. It is true that there is an attempt to connect this episode with the Vindhyavāsini myth by describing Mahiṣa as Sumbha's son (68.12b), but this statement sounds very abrupt since there is no allusion in the Vindhyavāsini myth proper foreshadowing it. To sum up, in the Kauśikī cycle, although Mahiṣa-suramardinī is assimilated to Kauśikī-Vindhyavāsini in that the slaying of the demon Mahiṣa is attributed to her, these two goddesses have not entirely been integrated into one and the same goddess.

Concerning the site where the battle between Kauśikī and Mahiṣa is supposed to have been fought in this episode, it is not explicitly stated in the text whether Mahiṣa awaited her on her way to or from Svarṇākṣa. However, based on the statement in 68.23d that she went back to 'the mountain (i.e. Vindhya mountain), her own abode' after killing Mahiṣa, it would be appropriate to suppose that she fought the duel with Mahiṣa on her way back from Svarṇākṣa to the Vindhya mountains. Svarṇākṣa is said in SP 68.10c–f to be the place 'where Viṣṇu, after propitiating the god Śaṃkara, had obtained various boons, [such as] the discus named Sudarśana, which was like the god of death to [his] enemies'. This verse is very similar to MBh 3.82.16cd–17ab, which mentions the place 'where in former times Viṣṇu worshipped Rudra in order to gain [his] grace and obtained a large number of boons difficult to obtain even among the deities'. The place is said to be Suvarṇākṣa in MBh 3.82.16a, an orthographical variant of Svarṇākṣa.³ The passage in the *Mahābhārata* is found in the section dealing with pilgrimages to various sacred places and Suvarṇākṣa is mentioned in the following sequence on its route: Sarasvatī, Śākambharī, Suvarṇākṣa, Dhūmavatī, Dhārā, Gaṅgādvāra, Kanakhala. Among the places Gaṅgādvāra is identified with is present day Hardwar and, concerning Śākambharī, Dey says that 'the celebrated temple of Śākambharī is situated in Kumaun on the road from

³MBh 3.82.16–17ab:

*tato gacchet suvarṇākṣaṃ triṣu lokeṣu viśrutam |
yatra viṣṇuḥ prasādārthaṃ rudraṃ ārādhayat purā || 16 ||
varāṃś ca subahūṃl lebhe daivateṣu sudurlabhān |.*

Suvarṇākṣa as an orthographical variant of Svarṇākṣa is also used in the SP 167.180a (SP_{Bh} 167.195a) in the list of Śiva's sacred places.

Hardwar to Kedārnāth' (1927, s.v. Śākambharī). Therefore, it is possible to locate Svarṇākṣa or Svarṇākṣa in the region around Hardwar. Other passages in the *Skandapurāṇa* also support this location. In SP 9.23–29, which relates the origin of Svarṇākṣa as a sacred place of Śiva in the Maināka mountains, the place is also called Svarṇaśṛṅga (9.23b). This place is located in SP_{Bh} 32.27 in the vicinity of Gaṅgādvāra under the name Svarṇaśṛṅga, an orthographical variant of Svarṇaśṛṅga.⁴ Hence, the battlefield in SP 68.10–23 may be considered to have been somewhere between this Svarṇākṣa near Hardwar and the Vindhya mountain range.

As mentioned earlier, Mahiṣa is also referred to as Sumbha's son (SP 68.12b) in this episode. In the Kauśikī cycle, the demon brothers Sumbha and Nisumbha are said to have been born in the Vindhya mountains as sons of Sunda and Nisunda (SP 62.50–52) and nurtured by Mt. Vindhya and his wife (SP 62.53). After conquering the gods, they returned to the Vindhya mountains, settled there, and had a battle with and were killed by Kauśikī-Vindhyaśinī there. This suggests that Mahiṣa, Sumbha's son, was also considered to live in the Vindhya mountains in the Kauśikī cycle. Therefore, it is likely that the battle between Kauśikī and Mahiṣa was implicitly located somewhere in the Vindhya mountains, where both antagonists were considered to live. Kauśikī's visit to Svarṇākṣa may have been a narrative means of realizing their single combat outside Kauśikī's abode without describing a lengthy battle scene between Mahiṣa and Kauśikī's retinue.

Let us now examine the relationship between the iconographical information contained in the episode and archaeological evidence of the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī images. The images that appear in North and Central India since the Kuṣāṇa period can be roughly categorized into three types:⁵ the Kuṣāṇa type, the Gupta type, and the Mediaeval type, according to the period in which each of them emerged. Preceding types were not completely

⁴SP_{Bh} 32.27–28ab:

*vṛkṣāḥ kanakhalā yatra gaṅgādvārasamīpagāḥ |
svarṇaśṛṅgaś ca girir meruparvatasamībhāḥ ||
tasmīn pradeśe dakṣasya yajño 'yam abhavat tadā |.*

The reading °*khalā yatra* for Bhaṭṭarāī's °*khale yās tu* (the reading of the Nepalese MSS) in 27a is conjectured by Bisschop and the present author, based on the same phrase in SP_{Bh} 74.2c, in which S₁ and S₂ read °*khalā yatra*. In 28b, Bhaṭṭarāī's 'sāv derived from A₃ is corrected to 'yam, following S₂ and S₃. For the location of Svarṇaśṛṅga in 9.23b, see also n. 50 of Synopsis, SP I; for the location of Gaṅgādvāra and Kanakhala, see Bisschop 2004b, 178–180.

⁵Von Stietencron's paper (1983) is valuable in offering us a clear idea of historical developments. The most exhaustive contribution is Seshadri's (1963), including many photos. For studies dealing with the historical developments in the Kuṣāṇa and the early Gupta images, see von Mitterwallner 1976; Härtel 1992; Srinivasan 1997, 282–304 (Chapter Twenty). The iconic types of the images which are scattered from the Deccan to South India (see Kalidos 1989 and Tartakov & Dehejia 1984–85) are not considered in the following discussion because the *Skandapurāṇa* was almost certainly composed in North India (see 1.3).

replaced by succeeding ones, but continued to be produced alongside them; nevertheless, the popularity of each type shifted from an older one to a newer one when a new type emerged, though there are regional differences depending on the manner of dissemination of new types. The characteristics of each type are summarized as follows:

1. Kuṣāṇa type:⁶ the goddess lifts the buffalo up with one of her left hands, either headlocking him or pulling out his tongue. One of her right hands presses his back. She holds several weapons in some of her other hands, but in many images of the Kuṣāṇa period she does not use any of them on the buffalo. She sometimes holds a wreath above her head with a pair of her hands and/or the sun and the moon with another pair. The number of her arms varies from four to six to eight. The appearance of a lion or lions is rare in the Kuṣāṇa period, but becomes more frequent from the late Kuṣāṇa onwards. Production of images of this type was centred on Mathurā.⁷

A group of images that may be regarded as a hybrid type of the Kuṣāṇa and the following Gupta types began to be produced in the sixth century. Early images ascribed to the sixth to the seventh centuries are found in Ellora, Elephanta, Aihole and Alampur. In these images, the goddess grasps the buffalo's snout with one of her hands, plants her foot or knee on his body and thrusts the trident into it. Later examples that may be classified into this type are scattered in Rajasthan, Chamba, and Afghanistan.⁸

2. Gupta type:⁹ the goddess lifts up either the buffalo's hind leg or his tail with her front left hand and has her right foot on his head. Generally, the trident wielded by her front right hand pierces either his back or his neck/head. She is usually four-armed, but the two-armed type is also found in some regions. A lion is absent except for some specimens later than the eighth century. One of the earliest specimens is the

⁶Von Stietencron 1983, 128–130 (Type 1), Abb.1–4; Seshadri 1963, Type 1 a, pls. 2, 3, 8; von Mitterwallner 1976, figs.1–5, 9; Srinivasan 1997, 287–290 (Type 2), Pl. 20.2–6, 9, 11–20; Viennot 1956; Agrawala 1958; Härtel 1973, 11, 14, Figs. 12, 15; 1992; 1993, 122f, 131–134, 245, 250; Harle 1970; 1971–72. Of these Srinivasan's study is the latest and most comprehensive. See also p. 115 in 4.3.2.

⁷Srinivasan 1997, 307, 322f.

⁸Diserens seems to propose a distinct group for the images of this type (1986, 465, n. 18 for references). Von Stietencron, on the other hand, includes this group in his Type 1 (1983, 128f, Abb. 5–6). Seshadri 1963, Type 1 d & e, pls. 10A, 11B, 12; von Mitterwallner 1976, figs. 11–14 (examples from Goa); Diserens 1986, Plate 1 (Chamba). It is uncertain whether the Mahiṣāsūramardini fragment from Afghanistan, called 'Scorretti Marble' (Schlumberger 1955, Plate 1), belongs to this group or represents a variant of the Kuṣāṇa type.

⁹Von Stietencron 1983, 130f (Type 2), Abb. 8–13; von Mitterwallner 1976, figs. 6–8; Seshadri 1963, Type 1 b & c, plates 4–7A, 9, 10B, 11A; Viennot 1971–72; Barrett 1975; Yokochi 1999b; *forthc.*

relief on the facade of Cave 6 at Udayagiri, dated to c. AD 400, and another is a fragmentary statue found in Nagardhan, ascribed to the first half of the fifth century. This type was popular during the fifth to the eighth centuries and spread in North India, the Deccan, Orissa, Gujarat, and the western coast.

3. Mediaeval type:¹⁰ the buffalo's head is cut off and the anthropomorphic demon emerges from the headless trunk. The goddess thrusts a weapon, usually a sword or trident, into either the anthropomorphic demon or the buffalo's body. A lion often joins the battle, attacking the buffalo. The number of the goddess's arms is generally more than eight. The earliest specimens are a small relief of Cave 15 at Ellora, ascribed to the first half of the eighth century,¹¹ and a fine sculpture in the State Museum, Bhopal, from Āvarā, Mandasaur District, MP, ascribed to the eighth century.¹² Fragments of a big statue of this type, assigned to the eighth century by Taddei, have been found in Vihāra 23 of a Buddhist sanctuary in Tapa Sardar, Afghanistan.¹³ After the eighth century, this type became the most popular all over India down to the present day, and there is therefore much variety within it. Unlike the earlier two types, this type found its way in the iconographical prescriptions in the Puranic literature, of which the earliest is probably MtP 260.55cd–66ab.

In order to compare the iconographical information in the episode to these iconic types, the climactic scene of Mahiṣa's death is the most crucial because it is that scene that these iconic types represent in distinct ways. In this episode the scene is described in 68.22, which says 'Lifting up the tail (*vāladhi*) of the enemy of Indra (i.e. Mahiṣa) and setting foot on his head forcefully, she pierced him through the back (*pr̥sthā*) with a trident (*triśūla*) and immediately deprived the demon of his life'. This description evidently conforms to the Gupta type. The theriomorphic figure of the demon Mahiṣa and the absence of a lion throughout the episode are also in accordance with

¹⁰Von Stietencron 1983, 134–136 (Type 5), Abb.20–27; Seshadri 1963, Type 4, plates 32–40.

¹¹Von Mitterwallner 1976, 208. On the west side of the *maṇḍapa* of the cave is a long, but much damaged inscription. It lists the kings of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas down to Dantidurga (c. 725–755), and seemingly refers to his visit to Ellora. See Burgess 1883, 87–89. About the dating of the cave and the inscription, Burgess says that 'the inscription may be taken as proving that it was finished, or at least in an advanced condition, when Dantidurga visited Elurā in the middle of the eighth century; and it is not improbable that he had constructed it' (ibid., 25f). An example of the same iconic type is also seen in a niche of the Kailāsa Temple, Ellora, the construction of which commenced in the reign of Dantidurga (ibid., 26, 29; Tartakov & Dehejia 1984–85, 320, Fig. 36).

¹²Misra 1985, pl. 26.

¹³Taddei 1973; 1978, 54–57, Figs. 12, 47–56, 81–93. Although the image is severely damaged, the photos and descriptions in Taddei's paper clearly show that the image represented this iconic type.

this iconic type. Furthermore, the period during which the *Skandapurāṇa* is supposed to have been composed, the sixth to the seventh centuries, fits into the period in which the Gupta type was the most popular. Therefore, it can be maintained that in all probability the episode of Kauśikī's slaying of the buffalo demon in the Kauśikī cycle of the *Skandapurāṇa* was closely related to the Gupta iconic type of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī.

5.2 The Gupta Iconic Type of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī

Let us now survey this type of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī iconography in more detail. The present author has collected about fifty specimens of the Gupta type, mostly ascribed to the fifth to the eighth centuries.¹⁴ Based on these specimens, general features of the images of the Gupta type will be pointed out before embarking on the further classification. The most noteworthy is that the iconic features of this type are fairly uniform. The standard iconography of this type was described in the list in the previous section. Most of the specimens ascribed to the fifth to the seventh centuries bear this standard iconography; deviations from the standard, with a few exceptions, are found only in the images that were produced either later than the eighth century or in peripheral regions such as Orissa and the west coast.¹⁵ Within the standard iconography, a small, but interesting variation is found in the Deccan, that is, the usage of the inverted trident instead of the ordinary trident. This regional feature seems to have been popular in the Deccan and, possibly, Gujarat.¹⁶ The attribute in the goddess's rear right hand is also considerably uniform: it is generally a sword, if preserved, except for a discus in the images found in Badami and Alampur. On the other hand, the attribute in her rear left hand varies according to the region and period. To the north of the Narmadā river, this attribute was a shield at first and, slightly later, was often replaced by a bell. A bell also appears in the images of Subtype A2 found around Goa. To the south of the Narmadā, on the other hand, it seems to be probable that it was generally a conch.¹⁷ The absence of a lion found uniformly in all the specimens before the seventh century is also remarkable, taking into account that the appearance of a lion became gradually more frequent in the Kuṣāṇa-type images from the late Kuṣāṇa period and was standard in the images of the Mediaeval type.

¹⁴These specimens are studied in more detail in Yokochi 1999b and some of them are in Yokochi *forthc.*. Barrett's paper (1975) was the first one to catalogue specimens of this iconic type with annotations, though he did not attempt any further classification. Viennot (1971–72) also deals with several images of this type.

¹⁵For the features of deviations, see Yokochi 1999b, 71; *forthc.*. Some of the images that deviate from the standard at one point or another are included in the following list of three main subtypes.

¹⁶Yokochi 1999b, 71; *forthc.*

¹⁷Yokochi *forthc.*

Because of this prevalence of the standard iconography, further subdivision of the Gupta type should be based on it, and thus the following two criteria for subdivision can be derived: first, whether the goddess holds the buffalo's hind leg or his tail; and second, whether the goddess thrusts a trident into the buffalo's neck/head or his back. According to these two criteria, the standard iconography can be classified into the following four subtypes:

- Subtype A1 : The goddess holds the buffalo's hind leg and thrusts a trident into his back.
- Subtype A2 : The goddess holds the buffalo's hind leg and thrusts a trident into his neck/head.
- Subtype B1 : The goddess holds the buffalo's tail and thrusts a trident into his neck/head.
- Subtype B2 : The goddess holds the buffalo's tail and thrusts a trident into his back.

Application of the two criteria to the actual specimens of the Gupta type, which was first undertaken in my 1999b paper, proved the validity of the criteria because the images classified under each subtype showed a particular distribution pattern. Of the four subtypes, Subtype A2 can be considered a regional variant because the specimens of this subtype have been found within a confined region around Goa.¹⁸ The other three, A1, B1 and B2, are the main subtypes and have been named the Northern, the Deccan and the Vindhya subtypes, respectively, by the present author according to the region in which early specimens of each subtype were produced. The following is a list of the specimens of the three main subtypes mostly ascribed to the fifth to the eighth centuries.¹⁹

- NORTHERN SUBTYPE : The goddess holds the buffalo's hind leg with her front left hand and thrusts a trident into his back with her front right hand, planting her right foot on his head. About nine specimens belong to this subtype.

The earliest specimen is the famous relief on the facade of Cave 6 at Udayagiri dedicated by a Mahārāja of the Sanakānīkas, a feudatory

¹⁸Von Mitterwallner 1976, 201, figs. 7 & 8; Yokochi 1999b, 79.

¹⁹For more detailed information on the images, see Yokochi 1999b, Appendix A (a catalogue of the images of the Gupta type) and the postscript including three additional images. The variants of these three subtypes are found under Subtypes A3, B3 and C in the 1999b catalogue, although calling them subtypes is not appropriate. In my forthcoming paper (b), these are grouped under the subdivisions 'Variants of Subtype A' and 'Variants of Subtype B'.

king of Candragupta II, in AD 401/402.²⁰ This relief is unique in its depiction of the goddess as twelve-armed.²¹ Two specimens that come from Bhumara, a circular panel on a *candraśālā* from the Śiva temple on the outskirts of the village of Bhumara and a stone statue found in the village of Bhumara, are both ascribed to the early sixth century.²² An image on a small seal from Rājghaṭ at Banaras, which is stylistically comparable to the panel from Bhumara, may be ascribed to the same century.²³ The specimens that possibly date from the seventh to the eighth centuries include two images from Vidiśā District, one from Gyaraspur²⁴ and the other from the Ramgarh hill near Pathari;²⁵ another from Bharatpur, Rajasthan;²⁶ one from Kanauj;²⁷ and one or two from Haryana.²⁸

- DECCAN SUBTYPE : The goddess holds the buffalo's tail with her front left hand and thrusts a trident into his neck/head with her front right hand, planting her right foot on his head. About sixteen specimens belong to this subtype.

A fine image, though its upper half is lost, from Nagardhan in Nagpur District, Maharashtra, ascribed to the first half of the fifth century, may be the earliest example of this subtype.²⁹ Three small pieces that resemble each other, two from the territory of the Eastern Vākāṭaka

²⁰Yokochi 1999b, A1 No. 1 in Catalogue. The votive inscription (CII 3, No. 3, Plate IIB (No 7, Plate VII in Rev.Ed.)) is on the wall just above this Mahiṣāsūramardīnī and the next relief. In the Allahabad stone pillar inscription (CII 3, No. 1, Plate I), the Sanakānīkas are referred to as one of the tribes who came to pay tribute to the Guptas as a result of Samudragupta's campaign. This relief is reproduced in many articles and monographs. Special studies appear in von Mitterwallner 1976; Harle 1970; 1971–72.

²¹This exceptional feature can be explained as the result of influence from the other Mahiṣāsūramardīnī relief on the north wall of the same courtyard of Cave 6, which represents a variation of the Kuṣāṇa type with the twelve-armed goddess (von Mitterwallner 1976, 199–202, 206f, Fig. 4).

²²This Śiva Temple is dated to about AD 520–530 by Williams (1982, 117–122). The former panel is now preserved in the Allahabad Museum (No. 152). See Banerji 1924, 13, Pl. XIVb; Iyer 1969, fig. 1; Barret 1975, No. (j); Yokochi 1999b, A1 No. 2 in Catalogue. For the latter image, see Yokochi 1999b, No. 2 in Postscript, Fig. 10. It seems likely that this image was somehow related to the same temple.

²³Iyer 1969, fig. 2; Yokochi 1999b, A1 No. 3 in Catalogue.

²⁴Viennot 1971–72, 70, 74f, fig. 6; Barrett 1975, No. (f); Yokochi 1999b, A1 No. 4 in Catalogue.

²⁵Berkson, 1978, figs. 2, 12, 12a; Yokochi 1999b, A1 No. 5 in Catalogue.

²⁶No. OS 64 in the Asmolean Museum, Oxford. Harle & Topsfield 1987, 23f (No. 31); Barrett 1975, No. (d); Yokochi 1999b, A1 No. 6 in Catalogue.

²⁷Viennot 1971–72, 71, 75, fig. 7; Barret 1975, No. (l); Yokochi 1999b, A1 No. 8 in Catalogue. The presence of a lion on the image indicates a later date. Viennot ascribes the image to the late eighth or the early ninth century.

²⁸Handa 1991; Yokochi 1999b, A1 No. 7 in Catalogue.

²⁹Bakker 1993, pl. 20.1; 1997, 84f, 130–133, pl. XXIXa; Yokochi 1999b, B1 No. 2 in Catalogue; *forthc.* The image is housed in the Nagpur Central Museum.

(Nagardhan and Mandhal) and one from Ajanta, also belong to the Vākāṭaka period, probably the fifth century.³⁰ A small plaque similar to these three, excavated at Bhīṭā, may belong to the same period.³¹ Another similar specimen, though this is larger in size, was found near the Holamma temple at Devihar, Dharwad District, Karnataka, which may also be ascribed to the same period.³² The famous, beautiful relief at Badami Cave 1 in Karnataka belongs to this subtype and can be dated to the second half of the sixth century.³³ To the southeast, two small plaques in limestone were excavated at Peddavegi, Eluru Taluk, West Godavari District, AP.³⁴ Both of them may be ascribed to the late fifth to the sixth centuries.³⁵ To the north of the Narmadā river are found some images ascribed to the seventh to the eighth centuries, one from Himgrājgaḍh, Mandasaur District,

³⁰The piece from Nagardhan is now preserved in the Nagpur Central Museum and that from Mandhal in the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, the University of Nagpur. See Bakker 1997, 80–83, 132, n. 106; Yokochi 1999b, B1 Nos. 1 & 3 in Catalogue, Fig. 8. The specimen from Ajanta was recently excavated. It was kindly brought to my attention by Dr Walter Spink. The image is discussed in comparison with those from Nagardhan and Mandhal in Yokochi *forthc.*

³¹Marshall 1911–12, 86, pl. XXXI fig. 14; Barrett 1975, No. (k); Yokochi 1999b, B1 No. 6 in Catalogue. The image is now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. See also Yokochi *forthc.* for a comparison with the three small pieces from the Vākāṭaka realm.

³²Sundara 1990, pl. XXVa; Yokochi 1999b, B1 No. 4 in Catalogue; *forthc.*

³³Yokochi 1999b, B1 No. 5 in Catalogue. The dating of the image is related to the inscription of Cave 3 bearing the date of AD 578 (Harle 1994, 127; Tartakov & Dehejia 1984–85, 318f). The image is reproduced in many articles and monographs.

³⁴Sarma 1986–87, 19, Pl. 6a; 2002, 74f, Fig. 10 nos. 1 & 10, Pl. 22 nos. 31 & 32. Two similar plaques were found from Kondrapadu, Nandigama Taluk, Krishna District, AP (Sarma 1994, 92, fig. 118). Under B3 No. 3 in the Catalogue in my 1999b paper, I regarded these plaques as representing a hybrid icon of the Gupta and Kuṣāṇa types, on the grounds that the goddess holds a short-handled trident upwards instead of the usual long-handled one piercing the buffalo. However, the considerable resemblance between these plaques and those from Peddavegi suggests that the short-handled trident may have been due to a misunderstanding of the inverted trident, which is depicted in the plaques from Peddavegi, by local artisans. The plaques from Kondrapadu show other iconic peculiarities: the sword wielded by the goddess's rear right hand is pointing downwards and, in one of the plaques, her rear left hand holds a shield, which is unusual among the specimens of the Gupta type in the Deccan. Sarma refers to a similar plaque of limestone found at Vīrapuram, Kurnool District, AP (Sarma 2002, 74).

³⁵Sarma attributes one of them (Pl. 22 no. 31; Fig. 10 no. 1) to Phase-IA corresponding to the Śālikāyana period (c. 4th to 5th century AD) (Sarma 2002, 15). However, this dating is not well attested since he states elsewhere that the plaque was picked up from the surface of disturbed pits (*ibid.*, 74f). The other plaque (Pl. 22 no. 32; Fig. 10 no. 10) is attributed to Phase-IB corresponding to the Viṣṇukunḍin period (mid 5th to the end of 6th century AD) (*ibid.*, 16, 75). It seems to be more probable that both of them were produced in the Viṣṇukunḍin period under some influence from Vākāṭaka art because of their iconographical similarity with each other and with the small pieces made in the Vākāṭaka realm (see Yokochi *forthc.*).

MP³⁶ and two fragments.³⁷ A grey gneiss plaque from Central India, preserved in the Indische Kunstabteilung, Berlin, may also have come from somewhere to the north of the Narmadā river.³⁸ To the west, two fine images, one from Karvan, Gujarat, and the other from Valabhi, Saurashtra, may be datable to the sixth to seventh centuries.³⁹ Further north, in Chamba, King Meruvarman dedicated an image of this subtype under the name of Lakṣaṇā Devī as the main idol of the namesake temple at Brahmar in the early eighth century.⁴⁰

- VINDHYA SUBTYPE : The goddess holds the buffalo's tail with her front left hand and thrusts a trident into his back with her front right hand, planting her right foot on his head. About seven specimens belong to this subtype.

The earliest specimen, though only the lower part remains, comes from Nachna on the Vindhya plateau, now preserved in the Rāmvan Museum. This statue may be datable to around AD 500.⁴¹ One more image, possibly ascribed to the late sixth century, is found on the

³⁶Garga 1980, 24, pl 13; Yokochi 1999b, B1 No. 7 in Catalogue. The image is housed in the Central Museum, Indore.

³⁷One comes from Jagat near Udaipur (Barrett 1975, No. (c); Seshadri 1963, 11, pl. 7A; Yokochi 1999b, B1 No. 13 in Catalogue), and the other from Jhusi near Allahabad (Yokochi 1999b, B1 No. 12 in Catalogue).

³⁸The Indische Kunstabteilung, Berlin, IC 34797. Härtel 1960, 78f, Tafel 47; Viennot 1971–72, 70f; Yokochi 1999b, B1 No. 10 in Catalogue. The shield in the goddess's rear left hand and the ordinary trident the goddess thrusts into the buffalo indicate its origin to be north of the Narmadā river.

³⁹Shah 1960, 25f, 118f, fig. 13; Seshadri 1963, figs. 6A & 9A; Barrett 1975, Nos. (a) & (b); Yokochi 1999b, B1 Nos. 8 & 9 in Catalogue. The fine stone statue from Valabhi was discovered together with a Kṛṣṇa image and five Jaina bronzes bearing traces of inscriptions, one of which may give a date between AD 538 and 548 (Shah 1960, 25). The Karvan image, now preserved in the Department of Archaeology, M. S. University of Baroda, is unfortunately very fragmentary, but the elegant style of the original statue is discernable.

⁴⁰An inscription engraved on the pedestal of the image records the dedication by Meruvarman, and it is assigned to the beginning of the eighth century on palaeographical grounds (Vogel 1911, 141f, pl.X). For the image, see Vogel 1911, 138, pl. VII(b); Goetz 1955, 78–80, pl. VI; Barrett 1975, No. (m); Yokochi 1999b, B1 No. 14 in Catalogue; for recent research on the temple, see Pieruccini 1997. The image is often ascribed to a later date on stylistic grounds and suspected to be a recast of the original (Diserens 1986, 463f). Even if that were the case, there is little doubt that the original represented this subtype, as does the extant image. Diserens cites two stone slabs of this subtype from the Upper Kulu Valley, ascribed to the ninth century (*ibid.*, 465, Plates III and IV).

⁴¹Rāmvan Museum, No. 83. Yokochi 1999b, No. 1 in Postscript, Fig. 9. According to Dr H.S. Caturvedi, Director of the Rāmvan Museum, this image was found in the vicinity of the Śiva temple known as Pārvatī Temple at Nachna. Pārvatī Temple is assigned to AD 480–500 by Williams, and other monuments and miscellaneous sculptures scattered about it show the continuation of the activity of temple construction at Nachna during the early sixth century (Williams 1982, 105–114). The style of the image, including the voluminous and relatively realistic representation of the buffalo, also points to an early date. Furthermore, the image somewhat resembles the big image from Nagardhan

Vindhya plateau, which is engraved on the hillside at Sindūrsī near Bahuriband, Jabalpur District, MP.⁴² To the north of the Vindhya mountain range, the relief in a niche on a cliff going down to the Betwa river, called Siddhi-kī-guphā, at Deogarh is another early example of this subtype and may be ascribed to the second half of the sixth century.⁴³ To the south, a fine, lively, sandstone image, datable to the seventh century, is preserved in the Alampur Museum.⁴⁴ In Orissa, many images representing this subtype were produced from the seventh century. In most of them the goddess is depicted as two-armed, but the standard four-armed goddess iconography is also found in a few early specimens.⁴⁵ A fragmentary, apparently old, statue of a four-armed goddess from the breasts up found within the temple compound at the Virajā temple at Jajpur may also be an early example of the Gupta-type Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image.⁴⁶ According to Brighenti's description, the image of the goddess Virajā at the Virajā temple, Jajpur, represents this subtype with the goddess having two arms.⁴⁷ It

stylistically (Yokochi *forthc.*).

⁴²Yokochi 1999b, No. 3 in Postscript. The image is at the west end among four images carved on the hillside facing north. The others are, from east to west, a two-armed Narasimha sitting in a similar pose to two Narasimha images on Rāmagiri (Bakker 1997, 140–142, Pl. XXXIII) except for the absence of the discus, Anantaśāyī-Viṣṇu, and a four-armed standing Viṣṇu with two *āyudhapuruṣas* (club and discus). All four images are published with photos by Trivedi (1976).

⁴³Viennot 1971–72, figs. 4 & 5; Barrett 1975, No. (g); Yokochi 1999b, 72–75, 85, B2 No. 1 in Catalogue, Fig. 1. Viennot examines the style of the image in detail and assigns it to the seventh century. In my opinion, however, as argued in the 1999b paper, the image is stylistically comparable to the Saptamātrkā panel at Naharghātī at the same site, ascribed to the sixth century (Panikkar 1997, 88, 93, figs 46, 47; Yokochi 1999b, Figs. 4, 5), and the elaborate hairstyle of the goddess on the image is very similar to, though less refined than, the female figurines on the base of the doorway jambs of the Daśāvatāra temple at the same site, dated around AD 500 (Williams 1982, 133–135, pls. 203, 204). A stone statue from Lakhamandar, Almora, ascribed to the ninth century, is another example of this subtype in North India (Nagar 1988, 216, Pl. 20). The statue appears to have been modelled on the relief at Siddhi-ki-guphā because it resembles that relief in almost all details, including the goddess's hairstyle and ornaments, sculpted in a less skillful manner.

⁴⁴Alampur Museum, No. 45. Seshadri 1963, 11, pl. 10B; Barrett 1975, 66; von Stieten-cron 1983, Abb. 11; Yokochi 1999b, B2 No. 2 in Catalogue.

⁴⁵The images bearing a four-armed goddess include one in one of the niches of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple (c. 650) and another in one of *caitya* medallions of the Mārkaṇḍeśvara temple (c. 750), both at Bhuvaneshwar. See Donaldson 1985, 59, 86, 1067, figs. 117, 3227; 2002, 233f; Panigrahi 1961, 134; Brighenti 2001, 220f; Yokochi 1999b, B2 No. 3 & No. 4 in Catalogue. As regards the Gupta-type images in Orissa, Donaldson says that 'as a group the four-armed images in Orissa appear to be earlier' than the two-armed images (2002, 233). His chart no. 13 (*ibid.*, 234) lists the specimens of the two and four-armed images with approximate datings.

⁴⁶Donaldson 1985, 187, 486, fig. 428; Yokochi 1999b, B3 No. 5 in Catalogue. The image is placed together with a lower-half fragment of a Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image of the Mediaeval type, and Donaldson ascribed the two as fragments of a single image to the late eighth or early ninth century.

⁴⁷The image of Virajā represents a two-armed goddess holding a spear which pierces

may have been the model for two-armed Mahiṣāsūramardīnī images of this subtype in Orissa, which are, according to Donaldson, ascribed to the period after the tenth century.⁴⁸

Of the three, the Northern and the Deccan subtypes sharply contrast with each other from the viewpoint of the two criteria mentioned above. Concerning the distribution also, the images of these two subtypes were produced in different areas, although the distribution ranges partly came to overlap with each other later. Examples of the Northern subtype began to be produced around AD 400, as the relief at Udayagiri indicates, and were scattered to the north of the Vindhya mountains and on the Vindhya plateau. To the south of the Narmadā river, on the other hand, the Deccan subtype appeared contemporaneously or slightly later in Vidarbha and diffuses to the south as far as the Kṛṣṇā and the Tuṅgabhadra rivers, to the north to the Gaṅgā river, to the west in Gujarat and Saurashtra, and to the northwest into Chamba, or, if its variants are included, to Kashmir and possibly Afghanistan.⁴⁹

The question now arises which of the Northern and Deccan subtypes was the archetype of the Gupta type, because it is very unlikely that the two subtypes emerged independently in different places, one in the eastern Malwa and the other in the eastern Vidarbha. The relief on the facade of Udayagiri Cave 6, the earliest specimen of the Northern subtype, may have been the model for the fine and large image from Nagardhan because, if the latter formed a set with the Viṣṇu and Ganeśa images from the same site, it is possible that this set was planned under the influence of an iconographical programme for Udayagiri Cave 6.⁵⁰ However, this relief at Udayagiri Cave 6 cannot be the only model for the Nagardhan one because, whereas it shows an exceptional iconography in that the goddess is twelve-armed, the Nagardhan image, although its upper part is now broken off, is very likely to have

the body of the buffalo with her right hand while she is uplifting his hind part by holding his tail with her left. She tramples on the buffalo's neck with her right foot' (Brighenti 2001, 219). In my 1999b paper, this image was classified into Subtype B3 (No. 5) according to Chanda's description of the image, which is based on the *dhyāna* recited by the priests at the temple (Chanda 1930, 4).

⁴⁸Donaldson 2002, 234f. According to him, most Orissan scholars date the Virajā image to the Gupta period on the basis of the popular, though incompatible with the evidence, idea that the two-armed icon of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī is older than the four-armed (*ibid.*, 235; e.g. Panigrahi 1981, 331). Brighenti also follows this idea and dates the image to the Gupta period (2001, 72, 219). However, it seems more likely that the image should be ascribed to the mediaeval period, as are the other two-armed Mahiṣāsūramardīnī images of the Gupta type in Orissa. For the two-armed images, see also Donaldson 1985, 1067, figs. 3228–3230; Brighenti 2001, 220f.

⁴⁹A small image from Kashmir, ascribed to the seventh century by Pal, represents a variant of the Deccan subtype, in which the buffalo faces not right but left (Pal 1986, 229f, S. 105; Yokochi 1999b, B3 No. 6 in Catalogue). Pal also states that several pieces similar to this image were discovered in Afghanistan.

⁵⁰Bakker 1997, 84f, 128–133.

originally had the standardized four-armed goddess as seen in the smaller image from the same site.⁵¹ Attention should now be directed to the political situation between the Gupta and the Eastern Vākāṭaka in the period. Near the end of the fourth century, the two dynasties had entered into a matrimonial alliance as a result of Rudrasena II's marriage with Candragupta II's daughter, Prabhāvatī Guptā, which must have enhanced the cultural interchange between the Gupta and the Eastern Vākāṭaka. Furthermore, in the early fifth century, Prabhāvatī's daughter, possibly called Atibhāvatī, was married to her brother, Ghaṭotkaca, a viceroy of the eastern Malwa.⁵² This event points to a strong tie between the eastern Malwa and the eastern Vidarbha in the period. The aforementioned images of Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa and Mahiṣāsūramardīnī found in Nagardhan, whether they were directly modelled upon the iconographical programme of the Udayagiri Cave 6 or not, must have ensued from this relation between the two regions. Therefore, it is sufficient to say for the time being that the contemporaneous emergence of the two earliest subtypes of the Gupta-type Mahiṣāsūramardīnī iconography in Udayagiri and Nagardhan can be attributed to the cultural interchange between the two regions around AD 400.

The earliest specimen of the third, Vindhya subtype, the image from Nachna on the Vindhya plateau, appears around AD 500, later than those of the other two subtypes. The Vindhya plateau is an area where the range of distribution of the two other subtypes overlaps. Furthermore, the iconography of the Vindhya subtype shows a mixture of those of the Northern and the Deccan subtypes: the goddess lifts up the buffalo's tail in line with the Deccan subtype and thrusts a trident into his back in line with the Northern subtype. Therefore, it may be thought that the two earlier subtypes, the Northern and Deccan, were syncretized into the Vindhya subtype by the turn of the fifth century. If that were the case, Nachna may have been the place in which this blending happened. Nachna was probably the centre of the territory of the Uccakalpa king Vyāghradeva in the last quarter of the fifth century, who acknowledged the suzerainty of the Eastern Vākāṭaka.⁵³ So there may have been some cultural influence from the Eastern Vākāṭaka, in which the Deccan subtypes were popular, upon Nachna. That the Nachna Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image is stylistically similar to the big Nagardhan image,⁵⁴ though iconographically different, underscores the point. At the same time, in Bhumara, which is situated about 22 km east of Nachna, are found two Mahiṣāsūramardīnī images of the Northern subtype ascribed to the early sixth century, as mentioned earlier in the list. Bhumara was in that period either within the territory of the Parivrājakas, who acknowledged Gupta

⁵¹Bakker 1997, 132.

⁵²Bakker 1997, 17, Appendix I (Kevala Narasiṃha Temple Inscription). For the political situation of the eastern Malwa in the Gupta period, see Bakker *forthc. b*.

⁵³Bakker 1997, 47–49.

⁵⁴Yokochi *forthc.*.

suzrainty, or on the boundary of the two kingdoms, the Parivrājaka and the Uccakalpa.⁵⁵ Therefore, it can be surmized that Nachna was the place, around AD 500, where the Gupta and Vākāṭaka cultural influences mixed, so that the Vindhya subtype, into which some features of the Northern and Deccan subtypes were blended, may have originated in Nachna. During the following centuries, this subtype diffused in both directions, north and south, from the Vindhya area, although only a few specimens have been found so far. On the other hand, this subtype took strong hold in Orissa from the seventh century.

The final scene of Kauśikī-Vindhyaśinī's slaying of the demon Mahiṣa, described in SP 68.22, precisely and vividly conforms to this Vindhya subtype.

5.3 What did the Gupta Iconic Type Signify?

As described earlier in this chapter, the Gupta type is the second earliest type of Mahiṣāsura-mardini iconography in North and Central India, and its iconic features differ distinctly from those of the preceding Kuṣāṇa type. Furthermore, while the production of the Kuṣāṇa type was centred on Mathurā, the Gupta type was probably the result of the cultural contact between Malwa under the Gupta and Vidarbha under the Eastern Vākāṭaka. Therefore, it may be assumed that the Gupta type signified something different from what was signified by the Kuṣāṇa type. In order to consider what the Gupta type may have signified, early textual sources related to this iconic type will be examined in this section. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are four early textual sources of the myth of a goddess's slaying the buffalo demon ascribed to the period from the sixth to the middle of the eighth century. The descriptions of the myth in all four documents are related to the Gupta iconic type. One of them is the episode of Kauśikī-Vindhyaśinī's slaying of the demon Mahiṣa related in the Kauśikī cycle of the *Skandapurāṇa*, which has already been studied in the first section of this chapter. In what follows, the other three sources, Anantavarman's inscription in a cave of Nāgārjuni Hill, Bāṇa's *Caṇḍīśataka*, and Vākpatirāja's *Gauḍavaho*, will be studied in chronological order.⁵⁶

Three inscriptions of Anantavarman, a chieftain of the Maukharis, have been found so far in the Barābar hilly area.⁵⁷ All three are undated, but ascribed to the first half of the sixth century on the basis of palaeographical comparison with the other inscriptions of the Maukhari kings and Harṣa-vardhana.⁵⁸ One is engraved in a cave called Lomaśa Ṛṣi Cave on the

⁵⁵Bakker 1997, 48f.

⁵⁶For the other sources often supposed to be early, see n. 1.

⁵⁷See Cunningham 1971, 40–53 and Buchanan 1925, 11–19, for the archaeological remains of this area.

⁵⁸Thapyal 1985, 19.

Barābar Hill, which records that Anantavarman of the Maukharis caused to be made an image of Kṛṣṇa and placed it in that cave of Pravaragiri, probably an old name of the Barābar Hill.⁵⁹ Another, found in a cave called Vadathi Cave on the Nāgārjuni Hill adjacent to the Barābar Hill, records that the same Anantavarman caused to be made an image of Bhūtapati (i.e. Śiva) and one of Devī (i.e. Pārvatī) and placed them in that cave.⁶⁰ The last one, which is relevant for the present study, is engraved in a cave called Gopī Cave on the Nāgārjuni Hill.⁶¹

This inscription records that Anantavarman installed an image of Kātyāyanī in that cave in the Vindhya mountains and dedicated a village to Bhavānī (i.e. Pārvatī), who must be identical to Kātyāyanī here. This image of Kātyāyanī in the cave was probably a Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image of the Gupta iconic type because Devī's foot placed on the head of Mahiṣāsura is praised in the first stanza,⁶² which calls to mind verses of the *Caṇḍīśataka* discussed later. Furthermore, Cunningham reports that numerous rude figures have been sculpted on the rocks of the northern face of the Kauwa-Dol Hill, which is situated to the southwest of the Barābar and Nāgārjuni Hills in the same hilly area. According to his report, the most common of these sculptures is the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image, and the goddess is depicted as four-armed, holding a sword and trident in her two right hands and a shield in her upper left hand, and grasping the buffalo's tail in her lower left hand.⁶³ From his description, it is evident that these sculptures of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī represent the Gupta iconic type, probably either the Deccan or Vindhya subtype. These rude Mahiṣāsūramardīnīs on the hillside are very likely to have been modelled on an authoritative image available in the vicinity, which must have been the image dedicated by Anantavarman. For these two reasons, it is highly probable that Kātyāyanī's image installed by Anantavarman in the Gopī Cave on the Nāgārjuni Hill was a Mahiṣāsūramardīnī of the Gupta iconic type.

In this inscription, attention should now be drawn to the statement that '[an image of] Kātyāyanī was installed in [this] wonderful cave of the Vindhya mountain' (*vinystādabhutavindhyabhūdharaḡuhām āśritya kātyāyanī*). The allusion to the Vindhya mountain here can be taken as a mere statement of the actual location of the cave, which means that this hilly area was a part of the Vindhya mountain range in the contemporary geographical view. However, the other two inscriptions of Anantavarman do not refer to

⁵⁹CII 3, no. 48, Plate XXXB; Thapyal 1985, 133f, Plate I.

⁶⁰CII 3, no. 49, Plate XXXIA; Thapyal 1985, 135f, Plate II.

⁶¹CII 3, no. 50, Plate XXXIB; Thapyal 1985, 137f, Plate III.

⁶²The first stanza runs as follows (CII 3, 227):

*unnidrasya saroruhasya sakalām ākṣipyā śobhām rucā
sāvajñam mahiṣāsūrasya śirasi nyastāḡ kvaṇannūpurah |
devyā vaḡ sthīrabhaktivādasadrśīm yuñjan phalenārthitām
diśyād acchanakhāṇśujālaḡaḡilāḡ pādāḡ padam saṃpadām ||.*

⁶³Cunningham 1971, 41. Buchanan also refers to these carvings (1925, 12).

the Vindhya mountain, in spite of the fact that they record the installation of images in the caves at the same site. Therefore, it may be not unreasonable to assume that the allusion to the cave of the Vindhya mountain as the place where the image of Kātyāyanī was installed implied that Kātyāyanī was regarded as not only Mahiṣāsūramardīnī but also Vindhya-vāsīnī.

The next textual source is Bāṇa's *Caṇḍīśataka*. Bāṇa(-bhaṭṭa) was a court poet of King Harṣavardhana, who reigned from AD 606 to 647. One of his works, *Caṇḍīśataka*, is a collection of a hundred and one or two stanzas⁶⁴ of benediction dedicated to the goddess Caṇḍī under various epithets. Each stanza is structurally independent but thematically associated with each other. This theme, with the exception of three verses (25, 45, and 54), is the myth of the goddess slaying the demon Mahiṣa. Because of the style, the myth is not narrated in sequence, but the features of the myth in this work can be inferred from the elements that will be collected in what follows below.

The most outstanding element is the goddess's foot that is either treading or kicking Mahiṣa, especially on his head. Her foot, or sometimes the toenails, is a special subject of praise in fifty-seven verses and, in nine of these, the foot is specified as the left one. A trident which the goddess thrusts into Mahiṣa is mentioned in seven verses. Two verses depict her as placing her foot on Mahiṣa and as wielding a trident.⁶⁵ The demon Mahiṣa seems to assume the buffalo shape during the battle at all times, although that shape was not regarded as his genuine one.⁶⁶ A lion is mentioned in a single verse, in which the goddess is said to rest her foot on the lion's

⁶⁴The text on which Mahārāṇā Kumbhakarṇa, who is well known as the author of the *Samgītarāja* and commentator of the *Gītagovinda*, and another anonymous commentator in Bahurā's ed. commented consists of a 101, which seems to have been the original version. The Kāvya-mālā Ed. adds one verse, the 102nd, at the end. There is another version that contains two more verses just before the 102nd verse, which results in 104 verses (p. 30f of Prastāvika Paricaya in Bahurā's ed.; the extra two verses are quoted on p. 31). In the following, quotations of verses of the *Caṇḍīśataka* are from the Kāvya-mālā Ed.

⁶⁵*Caṇḍīśataka* 32 and 79:

sadyaḥ sādhitasādhyam uddhṛtavatī śūlaṃ śivā pātu vaḥ
pādapraṇṭaviṣakta eva mahiṣākāre suradveṣiṇi |
diṣṭyā deva vṛṣadhvaṇo yadi bhavān eṣāpi naḥ svāminī
saṃjātā mahiṣadhvajeti jayayā kelau kṛte 'rdhasmitā || 32 ||;
gāḍhāvaṣṭambhapādaprabalabharanamatpūrvakāyordhvabhāgam
daityaṃ saṃjātāśikṣaṃ janamahiṣam iva nyakkṛtāgryāṅgabhāgam |
ārūḍhā śūlapāṇiḥ kṛtavibudhabhayaṃ hantukāmaṃ sagarvaṃ
deyād vaś cintitāni drutamahiṣavadhāvāptatuṣṭir bhavānī || 79 ||.

⁶⁶The expressions that indicate the demon's buffalo shape are *mahiṣitavapus* (18, 52, 74, 101), *mahiṣavapus* (36, 38), *mahiṣatanubhṛt* (73, 82), and *dhr̥tamahiṣatanu* (76), all of which mean 'the one who takes the buffalo shape'. The idea that his buffalo shape is not genuine but disguised is attested from the following words: *kaiṭabhāviṣkṛtamahiṣatanu* (53, 75); *chalamahiṣatanu* (86); *miṣamahiṣatanu* (95). His horn, or a pair of his horns, is also mentioned in many verses.

shoulder.⁶⁷ All these elements indicate that the version of the myth the author had in mind was related to the Gupta iconic type, although the foot the goddess placed on the buffalo's head is the left rather than the right in the Gupta type.⁶⁸ The number of her arms is not specified, but her arms are mentioned in the plural in verse 39. She is also depicted as having three eyes in three verses (39, 40, 51), a feature shared with Vindhyavāsīnī in the Kauśīkī cycle, but which deviates from the standard iconography of the Gupta type. Compared to the simple story of the same myth found in the Kauśīkī cycle, Bāṇa seems to have known a more complicated one. Many verses suggest that the duel between the goddess and Mahiṣa was preceded by the war between the gods and the demons, as well as Mahiṣa's victory over the gods; Jayā and Vijayā attend on her;⁶⁹ she wields not only a trident but also a bow with arrows and a sword.

As mentioned above, the myth of the goddess killing the demon Mahiṣa is the theme in all the verses except for three. These three verses (25, 45 and 54) describe the Vindhyavāsīnī myth known in the *Harivaṃśa*. Of them, verses 25 and 45 depict the scene in which the goddess ascended to heaven, when she was dashed on a rock by Kaṃsa, and verse 54 the scene in which she, ascending to heaven from Kaṃsa's hand, roared with laughter and threatened him.⁷⁰ In verse 45, rocks on a peak in the Vindhya mountains are regarded as her future abode (*āgāmvindhyācalaśikharaśilāvāsa°*). This juxtaposition of the Vindhyavāsīnī myth and the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī one shows, as in the Kauśīkī cycle, that Vindhyavāsīnī and Mahiṣāsūramardīnī were considered to be one and the same goddess, although the two myths had

⁶⁷ *Caṇḍīsataka* 43:

*dattvā sthūlāntramālāvalivighasahasadghasmarapretakāntaṃ
kātyāyanyātmanaiva tridaśaripumahādaitya dehōpahāram |
viśāntyaī pātu yuṣmān kṣaṇam upari dhṛtaṃ kesariskandhabhitter
bibhrat tatkesarālīm alimukhararaṇannūpuraṃ pādapadmam ||*

⁶⁸ The goddess's left foot is praised in verses 10, 42, 47, 74, 82, 89, 93, 94 and 101, of which all but one (42) denote the left foot in the term *vāma*. As Quakenbos suggests in note 6 on verse 10 in his translation of this work, *vāma*, in addition to 'left', means 'adverse' (e.g. to the buffalo demon) and 'charming' and is used as a pun connoting these two meanings.

⁶⁹ For Jayā and Vijayā, see n. 89 in 4.3.2.

⁷⁰ *Caṇḍīsataka* 25, 45, and 54:

*spardhāvārdhitavindhyadurbharabharavyastād vihāyastalaṃ
hastād utpatitā prasādayatu vaḥ kṛtyānī kātyāyanī |
yām śulām iva devadārugaṭitām skandhena mohāndhadhīr
vadhyaoddeśam aśeṣabāndhavakuladhvaṃsāya kaṃso 'nayat || 25 ||;
āhantuṃ nīyamānā bharavidhurabhujasraṃsamānobhayāṃsaṃ
kaṃsenaināṃsi sā vo haratu hariyaśorakṣaṇāya kṣamāpi |
prāk prāṇān asya nāsyad gaganam udapatad gocaraṃ yā śilāyāḥ
saṃprāpyāgāmvindhyācalaśikharaśilāvāsayogodyateva || 45 ||;
hastād utpatya yāntya gaganam agaṇitādhairyaṃvīryāvālepaṃ
vailakṣyeneva paṇḍudūyutim aditisutārātīm āpādayantyāḥ |
darpānalpātṭahāsadvigunatarasitāḥ saptalokījananyāḥ
tarjanyā jānyadūtyo nakharucitatayas tarjayantyā jayanti || 54 ||.*

not yet been integrated. In this respect, the second verse may be noteworthy because it describes the goddess, called Śivā, as the one ‘whose foot, which was planted on Mahiṣa’s shoulder comparable to a touch-stone, because of her mistaking it for the Vindhya mountain, deprived him of his life through mere ignorance (i.e. as a result of her mistake)’.⁷¹ The description suggests that the goddess killed Mahiṣa in the Vindhya mountains. Although we cannot conclude from only one verse that this myth was set in the Vindhya mountains in the version known by Bāṇa, if that were the case, Mahiṣāsura-mardinī and Vindhyavāsini would have merged into the goddess who lives in the Vindhya mountains and kills the demon Mahiṣa there.

Finally, the relationship of the goddess with Pārvatī should be commented on briefly. In this poem, the goddess Caṇḍī is not a separate manifestation of Pārvatī but equated with her. In many verses, Śiva is referred to as her husband and their conjugal affection is depicted. Guha (i.e. Skanda) and Kuñjarendrānana (‘One who has the face of a chief elephant’, i.e. Vināyaka) appear in verse 67 as her sons and, together with Nandin, a chief of Śiva’s Gaṇas, are referred to in some other verses. Furthermore, some of her epithets, Umā, Pārvatī, Haimavatī, Gaurī, and ones meaning Śiva’s wife, such as Rudrāṇī, clearly denote Pārvatī. On the other hand, it is evident that the main subject of praise is the goddess as Mahiṣāsura-mardinī assimilated to Vindhyavāsini, as discussed above. Therefore, unlike the case in the Kauśikī cycle, the intention behind equating this goddess with Pārvatī in this work was probably to elevate her to the state of Pārvatī, Śiva’s consort, rather than to incorporate her into Pārvatī.⁷² This is also true of Anantavarman’s inscription. There Kātyāyanī is also called Bhavānī so as to be identified with Pārvatī. However, the fact that the goddess is described in the first stanza as Mahiṣāsura-mardinī and that she was represented by an image with the Mahiṣāsura-mardinī iconography suggests that the object of worship was primarily the goddess as Mahiṣāsura-mardinī and, therefore, her identifica-

⁷¹Caṇḍīśataka 2:

*humkāre nyakkṛtodanvati mahati jite śiṅjitair nūpurasya
śliṣyacchrṅgakṣate ’pi kṣaradasrji nijālaktakabhrāntibhāji |
skandhe vindhyādribuddhyā nikaṣati mahiṣasyāhito ’sūn ahārṣīd
ajñānād eva yasyāś caraṇa iti śivaṃ sū śivā vaḥ karotu ||.*

The translated part is from *skandhe* in pāda c to *caraṇa* in pāda d. The translation of *nikaṣati* as ‘comparable to a touch-stone’ follows Kumbhakarṇa’s interpretation. According to him, the black shoulder of Mahiṣa with a streak of blood dripping from the goddess’s foot injured by Mahiṣa’s horn, which is depicted in pāda b, is compared to a touch-stone with a streak of gold (*nikaṣa ivācaratīti nikaṣati, nikaṣatīti nikaṣan tasmin nikaṣati | kim uktaṃ bhavati, mahiṣasya kṣṇe skandhe raktimavaśān nikaṣopamā* | on p. 18 of Bahurā’s ed.).

⁷²If Bāṇa knew the Śaiva version of the Vindhyavāsini myth in one form or another, this may have been one of the reasons why Bāṇa used the Bhāgavata version of the Vindhyavāsini myth rather than the Śaiva version, in spite of the distinct Śaiva affiliation of this poem. It is uncertain whether the *Skandapurāṇa* precedes the *Caṇḍīśataka* and whether Bāṇa knew a version of the Vindhyavāsini myth similar to that found in the Kauśikī cycle.

tion with Pārvatī would have been made to make her as authoritative as Pārvatī.

Of the various epithets of the goddess used in this work, the epithets other than those clearly signifying Pārvatī are Caṇḍī (71), Caṇḍikā (46, 49, 102), Ambikā (12, 48, 51, 75, 86, 96, 99), Āryā (3, 55), Śivā (2, 6, 23, 30, 32), Durgā (8), Kātyāyanī (14, 25, 43), Kālī (11, 26, 61), Bhadrakālī (22, 76, 89) and Kālarātri (53).⁷³ Among them, Ambikā may have been another epithet of Pārvatī as it was in the *Skandapurāṇa*. The other epithets were probably associated with either Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, Vindhyavāsīnī, or the goddess into whom both goddesses were united by the time of Bāṇa.⁷⁴

The last source to study is Vākpatirāja's *Gaiḍavaho*. Vākpatirāja was a court poet like Bāṇa; he served King Yaśovarman, who reigned from Kanauj, probably in the second quarter of the eighth century.⁷⁵ His *Gaiḍavaho*, a Prakrit poem, describes Yaśovarman's *divijaya*, a nationwide campaign. The work begins with sixty-one verses of benediction that invoke various deities. One of them praises a goddess who kicks Mahiṣāsura with her foot,⁷⁶ which seems to echo the Gupta iconic type of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī.

According to this poem, when King Yaśovarman embarked on his *divijaya*, the first hostile king he attacked was the Magadha king; on the way, he paid homage to 'the blessed lady who lives in the cave of the Vindhya mountain'.⁷⁷ The eulogy he dedicated to the goddess encompasses fifty-three verses (285–337), in which various types of goddesses are depicted under one and the same goddess addressed as the second person, the sole object of the eulogy. She is described as Mahiṣāsūramardīnī in eight verses, as Pārvatī in eight verses, as Vindhyavāsīnī in three verses, and as Nidrā in one verse. It is perfectly clear that the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī myth and the Pārvatī myth are the favourite themes, and the Vindhyavāsīnī myth in the Bhāgavata version

⁷³These epithets are sometimes exchanged in the texts found in Kumbhakarṇa's commentary and a commentary by an anonymous commentator, both edited by Bahurā.

⁷⁴In the *Kādambarī*, another work by Bāṇa, the following epithets are used for probably the same goddess: Kātyāyanī (p. 40, l. 5 and p. 66, l. 3), Caṇḍikā (p. 65, l. 4, p. 462, l. 1 and p. 463, l. 7), Ambikā (p. 68, l. 4 and p. 459 l. 7), and Durgā (p. 69, l. 1, p. 453, l. 2 and p. 460, l. 7). The list of Pārvatī's epithets in AK 1.1.35cd–36 (36cd–38 in Ramanathan's ed.) contains the following names: Umā, Kātyāyanī, Gaurī, Kālī, Haimavatī, Īśvarī, Śivā, Bhavānī, Rudrānī, Śarvānī, Sarvamaṅgalā, Aparṇā, Pārvatī, Durgā, Mrḍānī, Caṇḍikā and Ambikā.

⁷⁵Suru's ed. of the *Gaiḍavaho*, Introduction, p. lvif; Bodewitz & van Daalen 1998, 42; Pandit & Utgikar's ed., Utgikar's supplementary notes for the second edition, pp. cclvi–cclx; Mishra 1977, 92–103.

⁷⁶*Gaiḍavaho* 43:
sā jaaī neurillena jīē calaṇeṇa tāḍia-kkhamdho |
ubbhiṇṇa-ruhira-kusumo jāo mahiṣāsūrasoo ||.

The quotations from the *Gaiḍavaho* in this part are from Suru's edition.

⁷⁷*Gaiḍavaho* 338:
ia viṇṇijha-guhā-ṇilayāē tammi-dala-sabara-siṭṭha-maggāe |
pahuṇā sapariaram bhaavatē vihio ṇamakkāro ||.

is also included, though in just two verses,⁷⁸ which follows the pattern of the *Caṇḍīśataka*. On the other hand, there are two features in this eulogy that differ from the *Caṇḍīśataka*. First, the gruesome descriptions that are usually given to the Cāmuṇḍā-type goddess, such as being decorated with skulls and bones (297 and 302), a tongue lolling with greed for gravy on bones (328) and riding on a dead corpse (333), are attributed to the main goddess.⁷⁹ On the other hand, the goddess who has an emaciated body—a definite feature of the Cāmuṇḍā-type goddess—is described in 329 under the name of Revāī (Revatī) as an attendant of the main goddess.⁸⁰ Second, this eulogy includes many references to the offerings made to the goddess. In addition to the usual items, such as incense, lamps, and flowers, these are blood, animals, swords and daggers, animal or human heads, hair, severed arms, mirrors, and red cloth and banners.⁸¹ Moreover, 319 refers to the women of the Kaula sect who came to see the sacrifice of great animals (*mahāpasu*), namely human beings,⁸² and the site is, in 327, described as a cremation ground (*masāṇa*) where parts of dead bodies that heroes (*vīra*, i.e. a practitioner of an intence, esoteric, form of tantric Śaivism) sell at night are hanging on the trees.⁸³ These verses suggest some influence of the

⁷⁸ *Gaiḍavaho* 308 and 326:

taṃ sahasi sajala-jīmūa-goarā gori vijju-bhāvammi |
kaṃsoppia-vajjha-silā-saha vva gaṇe samuppāi || 308 ||;
aṃgamavalamvīālīm̐bi-sarasa-ṇara-vaṇa-pādaṃ vahasi |
ajjavi kaṃsa-pphoḍaṇa-lalaṃta-ṇiaaṭṭhi-sidhilaṃ va || 328 ||.

Gaiḍavaho 290 refers to Mount Vindhya and Himālaya as the goddess's abodes:

tuhīṇa-girī devi tumāi jaṇaa-bhāveṇa gāravaṃ ṇō |
vimjjhālo vi kaṃdara-ṇivāsa-līlāē kallāṇi ||.

⁷⁹ *Gaiḍavaho* 297, 302, 328 and 333

palayaṃ vā kālī ṇa ṇimmavesi rūvassa te aṇaṃtassa |
savvaṃge kaha ṇu kavāla-maṃḍalādaṃbaram ghadaū || 297 ||;
jāhe raṇī-rūveṇa phurasi sasahara-vidaṃbia-kavālā |
tāhe vi ṇaraṭṭhi-pasāhaṇammi tuha ghadaū gaha-cakkaṃ || 302 ||;
sarasatṭhi-daṃḍa-loheṇa caṇḍi ahara-ppahāruṇe tujjha |
jīhā ṇia-dasaṇa-maūha-maṃḍaleccea saṃvalai || 328 ||;
kuṇavattaṇa-sulahūsāsa-kāya-ṇivvaḍia-gāravo appā |
tuha dhāraṇa-kkhamo kīrai vva ṇaṇu vāhaṇa-saveṇa || 333 ||.

She is called Kālī in 297 and Caṇḍī in 328, and regarded as night (*raṇī*) in 302.

⁸⁰ *Gaiḍavaho* 329:

paai-parisikka-kāyā purao saṃcarai revai tujjha |
iha sai saṃṇihia-mahā-parea-bhaya-mukka-māsavva ||.

See also n. 81 in 4.3.1.

⁸¹ *Gaiḍavaho* 294, 295 (offering of buffalos), 306, 307, 310, 311, 317, 318, 322, 330, 331, 332, 334 and 336. Above all, the image of blood is predominant in many of these verses.

⁸² *Gaiḍavaho* 319:

visasiijaṃta-mahā-pasu-daṃsaṇa-saṃbhama-paropparārūḍhā |
gaṇecccia gaṃdha-uḍiṃ kuṇaṃti tuha kaula-ṇārīo ||.

⁸³ *Gaiḍavaho* 327:

sūeṃti vīra-vikka-vikkamamiha jāmīṇi-masāṇesu |
avalambia-kuṇava-cchea-pāḍalā sāhi-sāhāo ||.

This verse calls to mind the famous scene of the cremation ground in the fifth act of

Tantric practices. Although there is no reference to the mode of rituals in the *Caṇḍīsataka* as the work picks up subjects from the myths, another work by the same poet Bāṇa, the *Kādambarī*, alludes to the offerings of animals and blood made to the goddess Caṇḍikā. Also, in the same work, a wretched, degenerate practitioner of the Śaiva Tantras is said to have resorted to a Caṇḍikā shrine as a priest.⁸⁴

Here attention should be paid to the two verses in the beginning of the eulogy. The first verse (285) describes the arched entrance (*torāṇa-ddāraṇ*) of the cave temple, referring to the goddess killing Mahiṣāsura. Then, in the second verse (286), it is said that ‘the head of Mahiṣāsura, which was covered with your toenails’ beams, was seen’,⁸⁵ which indicates that the goddess’s foot was placed on the buffalo demon and therefore points to the Gupta iconic type of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī. Because this verse immediately follows the description of the entrance of the cave and begins with *diṭṭhaṇ* (‘[it] was seen’), it may not be too far-fetched to suppose that the main idol in the cave is described in this verse, namely, the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image bearing the Gupta-type iconography. Among the other verses related to the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī myth, 324 refers to her foot planted on Mahiṣa’s head, 293 to Mahiṣa’s horn that pulled off her anklet and was broken by her, and 305 to three blood-streams flowing from Mahiṣa’s body pierced by her trident.⁸⁶ They also suggest that the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī myth the poet had in mind

Bhavabhūti’s *Mālatīmādhava*, contemporary with the *Gaiḍavaho*.

⁸⁴In the description of a general of the *śabala* army, his arms are said to have had many sword cuts made to offer blood to Caṇḍikā (*caṇḍikārudhirabalipradānāyāsakṛnniśita-śastrollekhaṣamitaśikhareṇa bhujayugalenopaśobhitam* on p.65). For a similar practice referred to in the *Harivaṇśapurāṇa*, see n.54 in 3.4. The description of the Caṇḍikā shrine in the woodlands (p.455, l.5–p.463, l.7) includes several allusions to the offerings of animals and blood; for instance, horns, tongues, eyes and heads of animals sacrificed there (*anyatrāṅkuritām iva kuṭilahariṇaviśāṇakoṭikūṭaiḥ, pallavitām iva sarasajihvāchedaśataiḥ, kusumitām iva raktanayanahasasraiḥ, phalitām iva muṇḍamaṇḍalair upahārahimsām darśayantīm* on p.456) and the courtyard that became slippery with the flow of blood (*prabhūtarudhiradarśanodbhūtamūrechāpatiteneva pratibimbitenāstatāmreṇa savitrāntarikṛtaiḥ kṣatajapravāhaiḥ picchilikṛtājīram* on p.456f). A red banner on the Caṇḍikā shrine is described from p.454, l.6 to p.456, l.4.

⁸⁵*Gaiḍavaho* 285 and 286:

baṇḍikā-mahiṣāsura-kula-kamṭhummoiehiṇ va tumāe |
māhavi ghaṇṭā-dāmehiṇ maṇḍiaṇ torāṇa-ddāraṇ || 285 ||
diṭṭhaṇ sāhējjārūḍha-tuḥiṇa-girī-khaṇḍa-diṇṇa-pīḍhaṇ va |
mahiṣāsūrasa sīsaṇ tuha calaṇa-ṇaha-ppahā-bhariaṇ || 286 ||.

⁸⁶*Gaiḍavaho* 324, 293 and 305:

sīsammī kao mahisassa devī maraṇā jo hi saṇpaṇṇo |
soccia jaṇassa jāo tuha calaṇo maṇḍala-tṭhāṇaṇ || 324 ||
khalio taiṇ rahasukkhitta-maṇi-tulā-koḍi-kumḍalāharaṇo |
siṇgo bhaṇḍa-tṭhavia-valaya-baṇḍho vva mahisassa || 293 ||
saṇkamṭāu va rosāruṇacchi-valaya-ppahāo mahisammī |
tuha sabari soṇia-sihā tisūla-maggesu disaṇti || 305 ||.

In addition, 288 refers to a lion as her vehicle. The other verses referring to Mahiṣa are 289 and 316.

was related to the Gupta type. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, the deity to whom the king paid homage is called ‘the blessed lady who lives in the cave of the Vindhya mountains’ (Viṃjjhaguhāṇīlayā Bhaavaī, see n. 77). Therefore, it seems to be likely that the goddess praised by the king was primarily thought to be Maḥiṣāsūramardīnī assimilated to Vindhya-vāsīnī and related to the Gupta iconic type, as may have been the case in the *Caṇḍīśataka* and Anantavarman’s inscription.

It is well known that Yaśovarman’s campaign described in the *Gaūḍa-vaho* is not a historical fact,⁸⁷ since he was defeated by King Lalitāditya Mukatāpīḍa of Kashmir, possibly in AD 733.⁸⁸ However, his conquest of the Magadha king is almost certainly based on historical fact, because an inscription found at Nālandā in Magadha, which records that Mālāda, a son of Yaśovarman’s minister, made a dedication to the Buddhist temple built by a king Bālāditya, praises Yaśovarmadeva as the protector of the world (*lokapāla*) in the second stanza.⁸⁹ Hence, Yaśovarman’s visit to the cave temple of the goddess may also actually have taken place. The location of this temple can be fixed roughly from the sequence of the story around the episode of his visit to the temple, which is as follows: Yaśovarman started his campaign in the autumn (192); he marched out of the city (254); he reached the area around the Son river in winter (276); a description of the marshes (277–279); he reached the Vindhya mountains (280–283) and continued marching (284); he paid homage with a long eulogy to the goddess living in the cave of the Vindhya mountains (285–338); he pondered about death after seeing the dead body (339–347); a description of the forest (348–353); the Magadha king fled without fighting (354); a description of summer (355–363); a description of rainy season (364–413); the Magadha king returned with his allies and the war commenced (414–416); defeating the Magadha king, he continued his campaign to the sea coast (417). This sequence shows that the cave temple in the Vindhya mountains was located somewhere between the Son river and Magadha country.

From these considerations, the temple Yaśovarman may have visited can be identified with one that meets the following three qualifications: situated between the Son river and Magadha country; a cave temple in the Vindhya mountains; and the main idol is a Maḥiṣāsūramardīnī image of the Gupta iconic type. All the three qualifications are fulfilled by the Gopī Cave on the Nāgārjuni Hill where Anantavarman probably installed a

⁸⁷See Mishra 1977, 67–92. Analyzing the themes and structure of this poem minutely, van Daalen and Bodewitz (1994, 1998) assume that Vākpatirāja was concerned with the representation of a *cakravartin* and say ‘That this *cakravartin* is Yaśovarman hardly seems to be essential’ (Bodewitz & van Daalen 1998, 58).

⁸⁸See the references given in n. 75. Mishra, after evaluating the available sources and the preceding studies, concludes that this defeat took place after AD 736 and before AD 749–753 (1977, 102).

⁸⁹Sastri 1929–30; Suru’s ed., Introduction, p. liiif.

Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image of the Gupta iconic type. Therefore, there is a high probability that the goddess's cave temple in the Vindhya mountains mentioned in the *Gaṇḍavaho* is the Gopī Cave on the Nāgārjuni Hill.

The above study of the three early textual sources of the Gupta iconic type of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, as well as the episode of Kauśikī-Vindhyavāsīnī's killing of Mahiṣa in the Kauśikī cycle of the *Skandapurāṇa*, has revealed that it is very likely that Mahiṣāsūramardīnī was assimilated to Vindhyavāsīnī in all the sources. Hence, the Gupta iconic type would have signified Mahiṣāsūramardīnī assimilated to Vindhyavāsīnī during the sixth to the middle of the eighth centuries. In that case, it may be permissible to project this signification of the Gupta iconic type onto the inception of this iconic type. As discussed in the previous chapter (4.2), the proto-myth of Vindhyavāsīnī took shape in a period not much earlier than the composition of the *Harivaṃśa*, ascribed to around the fourth century, and simultaneously the goddess called Vindhyavāsīnī emerged as a legitimate member of the Hindu pantheon. When Vindhyavāsīnī came to occupy a firm position in the Hindu pantheon, for which the incorporation of her into the Bhāgavata/Vaiṣṇava myth in the *Harivaṃśa* is a piece of evidence,⁹⁰ an iconical representation of her must have become required, especially in order to perform the Hindu ritual of her worship.⁹¹ However, no distinct icon of Vindhyavāsīnī at an early period has yet been found.⁹² At that period, Kuṣāṇa-type iconic images of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, another demon-slaying goddess, were popular in North India. It may be because of the popularity of the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī icon that Vindhyavāsīnī did not develop her unique iconography but, instead, a new type of the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī iconography emerged, viz. the Gupta type. As mentioned earlier, the emergence of the Gupta iconic type of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī probably occurred in the late fourth century, which seems to fit the chronological context of the Hinduization process of Vindhyavāsīnī. Moreover, Vindhyavāsīnī's representation with the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī iconography would not have been strange, because the *Harivaṃśa* attests that she was worshipped with animal sacrifices (p. 97 in 4.3) and a buffalo was probably the biggest and most representative animal for sacrifice at that time as it was in a later period. If the Gupta iconic type of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī had represented Vindhyavāsīnī, this would naturally have resulted in the assimilation of the two goddesses, Mahiṣāsūramardīnī and Vindhyavāsīnī.

As discussed earlier, the idea that the goddess kills the buffalo demon in the Vindhya mountains can be distilled from a verse of the *Caṇḍīśataka* and, in the Kauśikī cycle, Vindhyavāsīnī's killing of the buffalo demon is likely to have been located in the Vindhya mountains. It may also have been implied

⁹⁰ A reference to her in the *Mṛcchakaṭika*, ascribed to the Gupta period, is another piece. The passage is quoted in n. 48 in 4.2.

⁹¹ See n. 98.

⁹² For the iconography that appeared later than the seventh century, see n. 102 in 4.3.2.

in Kātyāyanī’s image dedicated by Anantavarman, which probably had the Gupta-type Mahiṣāsūramardīnī iconography and was placed in a cave in the Vindhya mountains. If that were the case, it can be surmized that this idea was the core of the assimilation of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī and Vindhya-vāsinī, although the myths of both goddesses were not entirely integrated in the following centuries.⁹³

5.4 The Rise of ‘the Warrior Goddess’

The Gupta iconic type of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī represented not only Vindhya-vāsinī but also local or regional goddesses in the process of its diffusion. An example is the image of Virajā in the Virajā temple at Jajpur, Cuttak District, Orissa. Viraja was known as a sacred place in the *Mahābhārata*⁹⁴ and the goddess Virajā is the tutelary deity of the place. In the Virajā temple, the goddess is represented by a Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image of the Vindhya subtype of the Gupta-type icon.⁹⁵ Another example is the im-

⁹³The meaning of the Gupta-type iconography is another matter. From the textual material discussed in this section, it is evident that the goddess’s foot placed on the buffalo’s head was the most important feature of this iconic type for her devotees. This posture can be interpreted in three alternative manners: martial, devotional and erotic. The martial interpretation, the goddess’s victory over the buffalo demon, is the most manifest. Furthermore, prostrating oneself and touching a victor’s feet is a typical posture of subjugation. In this regard, the goddess may also have been considered to symbolize a victorious king. As for the second, devotional one, it is needless to say that worshipping the goddess’s foot is a devotional act for her devotee; however, it is not certain that the buffalo demon was regarded as her devotee in this iconography. Verse 6 of the *Caṇḍīśataka* states that the buffalo demon, though wicked, attained heaven as a result of being killed by her foot. Verse 8 may also suggest the same idea, which becomes clear if we read *svaḥstho* for *svastho* in pāda d, cited in Kumbhakarṇa’s commentary as an alternative (it is not rare in old manuscripts that *svaḥstho* and *svastho* are not distinguished). So, setting her foot on the buffalo’s head may have been seen as an act of grace from the goddess’s viewpoint. The erotic interpretation may sound strange, but a lady who is angry with her lover’s infidelity and kicks his head when he prostrates himself and apologizes to her for his fault is a popular theme of love quarrels in classical Indian literature. In *Caṇḍīśataka* 74 and 75, her kicking of the buffalo demon is compared to that of her husband Śiva who offended her in a love quarrel. Hardy has pointed out the second and third interpretations in his analysis of the *Caṇḍīśataka* (1994, 282f and 497).

⁹⁴MBh 3.83.6–7:

tato vaitaraṇīm gatvā nadīm pāpaprāmocanīm |
virajam tīrtham āsādyā virājati yathā śaśī ||
prabhavec ca kule puṇye sarvapāpaṃ vyapohati |
gosahasraphalam labdhvā punāti ca kulam naraḥ ||.

⁹⁵The present Virajā temple is considered to be a later replacement of the original one, for which Panigrahi states that ‘At Kalasapur, situated about a mile from the present temple of Viraja at Jajpur, which is traditionally known to be the original site of the shrine of that deity, there are still the remains of a small stone temple that may be assigned to the early Gupta period’ (Panigrahi 1981, 370). The Virajā image of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī iconography may be an early mediaeval production as the goddess has two arms rather than four, which was a typical feature in the mediaeval Orissan Mahiṣāsūramardīnī images

age of Lakṣaṇā Devī in the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple at Brahmor, Chamba District, HP. This is a Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image of the Deccan subtype of the Gupta-type iconography and the inscription on its pedestal records that King Meruvarman had the image of Lakṣaṇā Devī made. The inscription is assigned to the early eighth century on palaeographical grounds.⁹⁶ Chamba's *Vaṃśāvalī*, the royal genealogy, also refers to Meruvarman's dedication of this image, calling it an image of Bhadrakālī.⁹⁷ During the period in which the Gupta iconic type gradually diffused, there must have been many other cases in which a Gupta-type Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image was used to represent the tutelary goddess of a specific locality.⁹⁸ Conversely speaking, Mahiṣāsūramardīnī gradually absorbed these local/regional goddesses into herself through the diffusion of her iconic images. The previous chapter examined the premise that the Vindhyaśinī myth in the Kauśikī cycle of the *Skandapurāṇa* shows that Vindhyaśinī absorbed local/regional goddesses into herself as her manifestations. In other words, the development of the myth propagated the belief that Vindhyaśinī was a supra-regional goddess ranking higher than the tutelary goddess in every locality. In the case of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, the diffusion of her Gupta-type iconography promoted a similar idea that each of local/regional goddesses is a manifestation of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī. These two processes occurred from the fifth or sixth century on. As discussed in the previous section, the assimilation of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī and Vindhyaśinī may have been commenced concomitant to the emergence of the Gupta iconic type, which was towards the

of the Gupta-type iconography. On the other hand, there is a fragmentary image in the temple complex, possibly a part of a Gupta-type image of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī bearing a four-armed goddess, datable to the seventh century (see p. 138).

⁹⁶ Vogel 1911, 141f, plate X. See n. 40.

⁹⁷ Vogel 1911, 85, *Vaṃśāvalī* 45cd–47ab:

devadevasya sthītaye mūrtiṃ naraharer api || 45 ||
pratiṣṭhāpya svaguruṇā kāśmīreṇa mahātmanā |
sūryāṃśaṃ cātmanā bhadrakālīṃ tatra gaṇādhipam || 46 ||
saṃsthāpya vṛṣam asyādhas tv alikhad rājaśāsanam |.

⁹⁸ Eschmann (1978) argues elaborately several patterns of the Hinduization of aboriginal goddesses, based on a variety of examples in Orissa. One of the patterns that occurs on 'temple level' of the Hinduization is to use an image of Durgā (viz. Mahiṣāsūramardīnī) as an iconic representation of a local goddess in the temple. In this respect, he says 'Worship at the temple level concentrates on the *mūrti*. Possession may occasionally occur, but basically the medium of the deity is supposed to be her image in the Hindu sense. It is therefore at this stage mainly, where the performance of *pūjā* is so much intensified, that the need for a "proper" image, at least basically corresponding to Hindu standards, becomes predominant. There are two possibilities to satisfy this need: either a "proper" image—usually an image of Durgā or Cāmuṇḍā is just added to the symbol and may eventually totally replace it, or the symbol itself is changed in such a way as to look more like an image' (p. 89). As for the first possibility, he also states 'The type of Hinduization at temple level, where a popular Hindu image is combined together with the aboriginal symbol, presents the least difficulties. There is no need for a special mythology or for iconographical legends—the close association if not identification of the Hinduized goddess with Durgā is just emphasized by the Durgā image representing her' (p. 90).

end of the fourth century. Therefore, the two processes, the integration of local/regional goddesses into Vindhyavāsinī through the development of her myth and that into Mahiṣāsūramardīnī through the diffusion of her Gupta-type iconography, continued interacting and enhancing each other in another process of assimilating both goddesses.

Finally, it should be asked which segment of society promoted this development. There are several extant Mahiṣāsūramardīnī images of the Gupta iconic type that may well have been produced under royal patronage. The Lakṣaṇā Devī image mentioned above is an indisputable example. It is also highly probable that the Udayagiri relief at Cave 6, the fine fragment from Nagardhan, the famous Badami Cave 1 relief, the earliest piece of the Vindhya subtype from Nachna, the Virajā image, and the lost Kātyāyanī image dedicated by Anantavarman are all royal examples. This suggests that the diffusion of the Gupta iconic type of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī was supported by the political ruling class.⁹⁹

Early textual material related to the Gupta type, discussed in detail in the previous section, strengthens this argument. In the Kauśikī cycle, Vindhyavāsinī, to whom the slaughter of the demon Mahiṣa is also attributed, was described as a secondary manifestation of Pārvatī, who is the Mother of the World as the Consort of Śiva, the Lord of the World, in the *Skandapurāṇa*. In the other three sources, on the other hand, the goddess into whom Mahiṣāsūramardīnī and Vindhyavāsinī were united was probably the primary object of devotion in spite of her being identified with Pārvatī. This difference between the Kauśikī cycle and the other three may have ensued from the difference between the social segments that composed them or caused them to be composed. It is highly probable that the redactors

⁹⁹See von Stietencron 1983, 137f, where he argued that the patronage of the warrior class was one of the decisive elements for the popularity of Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī. He also pointed out the role this goddess played in the Hinduization process in the early mediaeval period through the identification of regional goddesses with her.

Royal patronage on Mahiṣāsūramardīnī may already have commenced in the late Kuṣāṇa period. From this period comes a fragment of a large Kuṣāṇa-type Mahiṣāsūramardīnī image found in Mathurā and preserved in the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin, which was probably used for worship beyond private or domestic confines (Härtel 1992, 85–87, plate 37; Srinivasan 1997, 290, Pl. 20.19). There is also a fragment of a large image belonging to Srinivasan's Type 1 of 'the Kuṣāṇa Warrior Goddess' (p. 115 in 4.3.2), which she dates to the fourth century (The Russek Collection, no. 605; Srinivasan 1997, 290f, Pl. 20.22). In this regard, Srinivasan suggests that the lower portion of the female figure found in the Māt shrine in Mathurā was originally an image of her Type 1 and represented a victory goddess, following Fussman's argument that, on the grounds of similarity between the Māt and the Surkh Kotal temple remains, the Māt shrine may have been a Kuṣāṇa dynastic shrine dedicated to the goddess Śrī. As for the Surkh Kotal temple A, Fussman states that it was called 'the shrine of the Victory (Oanindo) of Kaniṣka', based on an inscription found there (SK 4), and that Bactrian Oanindo corresponds to the Indian goddess Śrī. See Fussman 1989; Srinivasan 1997, 291, Pls. 20.23 and 24. There is one problem when Fussman's and Srinivasan's arguments are put together: it is very unusual for the goddess Śrī to be represented as a warrior-type goddess in the Indian tradition.

of the *Skandapurāṇa* were a group of lay Śaiva Brahmins. The three other sources, on the other hand, are all closely connected with kings. The authors of the *Caṇḍīśataka* and the *Gauḍavaho*, Bāṇa and Vākpatirāja respectively, were both court poets. The theme of the *Gauḍavaho* is the *digvijaya* by King Yaśovarman, so that its close tie with that king, whom Vākpatirāja served, is beyond doubt. As for the *Caṇḍīśataka*, although the conditions under which the poem was composed are less clear, Bāṇa is the author of the *Harṣacarita*, an account of King Harṣavardhana, leading to his accession to the throne, which suggests that he worked under the strong patronage of that king. As regards the third source, Anantavarman's inscription in the Gopī Cave on the Nāgārjuni Hill, it is obvious that Anantavarman, a chieftain of the Maukharis, caused it to be composed. From this contrast between the *Skandapurāṇa* and the others, it could be maintained that the devotion to the goddess into whom Mahiṣāsūramardīnī and Vindhyavāsīnī were assimilated was supported by the social segment centred on kingship, while Pārvatī was of greater value in the Brahmanical Śaiva milieu.

Concerning the worship of Vindhyavāsīnī, Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracarita*, generally ascribed to the sixth to the seventh centuries,¹⁰⁰ provides a few clues for its association with kingship. In the sixth chapter of the work, it is said that King Tuṅgadhanvan of the Suhma country made a wish to Vindhyavāsīnī in her shrine at the capital city Dāmaliptā to obtain children and was granted a son and a daughter. Vindhyavāsīnī is described as having forgotten her fondness for living in the Vindhya mountains and having lived in the shrine at Dāmaliptā.¹⁰¹ The eighth chapter refers to her shrine on the river Revā (viz. Narmadā) in the vicinity of Māhiṣmatī. This chapter, which may have been set against the historical background of the fall of the Gupta and the Vākāṭaka dynasties in the second half of the fifth century,¹⁰² is intriguing in the present discussion because Vindhyavāsīnī was given a significant role in the stratagem of Viśruta, the hero of this chapter, to regain the Vidarbha kingdom for the legitimate successor. When the king of Aśmaka attacked and conquered the Vidarbha kingdom, the queen with her young son and daughter survived and fled to Māhiṣmatī. There Mitravarman, the king of Māhiṣmatī, made advances to the queen

¹⁰⁰Lienhard dated the work 'on the evidence of style and structure, as a little earlier than Subandhu and Bāṇa, i.e. before the middle of the seventh century' (1984, 234).

¹⁰¹*Suhmapatis tuṅgadhanvanāmānapatyāḥ prārthitavān amuṣminn āyatane viṣṇu-vindhyavāsārāgaṃ vasantī vindhya-vāsīnyāḥ pādāmūlād apatyadvayam* (p.207). On the next page, she is called 'the goddess who has the moon as a crest-jewel' (*somāpīḍām devīm*).

¹⁰²See Spink 1983, 260–281, in which Spink identifies Viśruta, the hero of this chapter, with Mahārāja Subhandhu, who is referred to as a king of Māhiṣmatī in an inscription dated to AD 486. Because the *Daśakumāracarita* is in principle a fantastic romance, it seems to be far-fetched to regard this chapter as a sort of record of historical events, as Spink did, although it is not unlikely that the author had the historical events at the fall of the Vākāṭakas in mind when relating the story of this chapter.

and, when rejected by her, attempted to kill her son, who escaped from the city to the Vindhya mountains. Mitravarman also arranged the marriage of her daughter with Pracaṇḍavarman, a brother of the Malwa king, in order to conciliate the queen. By chance, Viśruta came to help her son and made the people believe, in the manner of Vindhyavāsini's prediction in the queen's dream, that Vindhyavāsini, taking the shape of a tiger, had protected the surviving prince of Vidarbha and would always protect him as his mother; that Viśruta would defeat the king of Āśmaka and enthrone the prince as king of Vidarbha.¹⁰³ It is true that Vindhyavāsini's prediction did not actually happen but Viśruta strategically let the queen tell it and made the people believe it with his trick. However, Viśruta would have been unable to succeed if there had been no popular belief that Vindhyavāsini could help a legitimate prince to recover his kingship.

As discussed in detail in the previous chapter (4.3.2 and 4.3.3), the Vindhyavāsini myth in the Kauśikī cycle of the *Skandapurāṇa* revealed her characterization as a noble or royal warrior and, furthermore, as a monarch. Although the *Skandapurāṇa* was probably composed in the Brahmanical Śaiva milieu, it is not necessary to postulate that this Kshatriyaization of Vindhyavāsini occurred in the same milieu.¹⁰⁴ Rather, it seems to be more likely, on the grounds of its nature, that her Kshatriyaization was more or less concomitant with the association of her worship with royal patronage and kingship, for which the *Daśakumāracarita* provided an indication.

The three processes mentioned earlier, local/regional goddesses' being integrated into Vindhyavāsini through the development of her myth, their being integrated into Mahiṣāsūramardini through the diffusion of her iconography, and the assimilation of both goddesses, in collaboration, would have brought into being a goddess who is not tied to a specific region or a specific demon-slaying myth, in other words, a goddess who is more universal than

¹⁰³ According to Viśruta's advice, the queen, after killing Mitravarman, told her fabricated dream vision of Vindhyavāsini to the chief citizens and ministers of Māhiṣmatī: 'svapne 'dya me devyā vindhyavāsinyā kṛtaḥ prasādaḥ| "adya caturthe 'hani pracaṇḍavarmā mariṣyati| pañcame 'hani revātātavartini madbhavane parīksya vaijanyam janeṣu nirgateṣu kapāṭam udghāṭya tvatsutena saha ko 'pi dvijakumāro niryāsyati| sa rājyam idam anupālya bālam te pratiṣṭhāpayisyati| sa khalu bālo mayā vyāghrīrūpayā tiraskṛtya sthāpitaḥ| sā ceyam vatsā mañjuvādini tasya dvijātīdārakasya dāratvenaiva kalpitā" iti| tad etad atirahasyam yuṣmāsv eva guptaṁ tiṣṭhatu yāvad etad upapatsyate' (p. 273). On the fifth day, Viśruta in company with the prince came out of Vindhyavāsini's shrine and said to the people who had gathered there in order to check on the queen's dream vision, 'itthaṁ devī vindhyavāsini manmukhena yuṣmān ājñāpayati— "sa eṣa rājasūnur āpanno mayā sakṛpayā śārdūlarūpeṇa tiraskṛtyādyā vo dattaḥ| tam enam adyaprabhṛti matputratayā mandamātrpakṣa iti parigrhṇantu bhavantah"| api ca durghaṭakūṭakoṭighaṭanāpātava-prakaṭaśāṭhyaniṣṭhurāśmakaghaṭaghaṭanātmānam māṁ manyadhvam asya rakṣitāram| rakṣānirveśas cāsyā svaseyam subhrūr abhyanuñātā mahyam āryayā' (p. 277). Vindhyavāsini is also called Durgā and Āryā (p. 227).

¹⁰⁴ Some influence of the Brahmanical ideology can also be found in the Vindhyavāsini myth in the Kauśikī cycle: for instance, an orthodox or Brahmanical manner of her worship (see p. 98 in 4.3).

either Vindhyavāsini, Maḥiṣāsuraṃardinī, or a goddess into whom both goddesses are assimilated. Who was this goddess? Because Maḥiṣāsuraṃardinī and Vindhyavāsini formed her nucleus, she must have inherited their significant features: a demon-slaying goddess, analogous to a royal warrior, or further a monarch (*cakravartin*), and possibly a virgin. Furthermore, she originated from the processes that was probably promoted and supported by the social segment centred on kings and the warrior class. Therefore, the present author calls this goddess ‘the Warrior Goddess’.